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ABSTRACT

Problems in the design and implementation of bilingual education programs are explored in this paper. Fundamental problems critical to the success of a national program in bilingual education are noted to be the dearth of qualified teachers and the lack of teacher education programs which have as their major objective the preparation of teachers for bilingual schools. Procedures and suggestions for the development of teacher training programs in bilingual education are suggested. (RL)

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PREPARING TEACHERS FOR BILINGUAL SCHOOLS

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The American people, most of whom are monolingual, are quite unaware of the extent of bilingualism in the United States. For years they have tended to equate the speaking of English with patriotism and good citizenship. Yet, a survey by Joshua Fishman in 1965 revealed that approximately 19,000,000 Americans do not use English as their home language, that some 500 non-English publications had a circulation of five and a half million, that about 1600 radio stations broadcast 6000 hours weekly of non-English programs, and that more than half of the 2000-3000 ethnic group schools at that time offered ethnic tongue instruction.[1] The publicity surrounding the passage of the Bilingual Education Act created an awareness in the American public that for some children instruction in their home language in the school was essential for their success in school.

Now, four years after the passage of that Act, State education agencies and local school districts are struggling to implement the Act. The problems are legion, and not the least of the problems is the dearth of qualified teachers and the lack of teacher education programs in the universities which have as their major objective the preparation of teachers for bilingual schools.

In the development of any program to prepare teachers for bilingual schools, the major tasks that we need to address ourselves to would seem to be:

1. To construct a profile of the local environment which will include the sociological, cultural, linguistic, economic, and educational characteristics.
2. To examine the nature of the bilingual school and to study the options for organization of the school.

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3. To define the special competencies needed by the teacher in the bilingual school.
4. To determine the general and specific objectives of the teacher education program in the light of the needed competencies.
5. To design the curriculum which will provide opportunity for the development of the needed competencies.
6. To establish means of assessing the progress of the prospective teachers toward the achievement of the needed competencies.
7. To recruit prospective students.

Let us examine in turn each of these tasks. Before discussing how to prepare teachers for the bilingual school, it is important for us to study carefully the milieu in which the bilingual school is to function. We need answers to such questions as:

1. What is the attitude of the dominant society in the community toward the home language of the children in the bilingual school?
2. What is the attitude of the minority group toward their home language?
3. For what percent of the non-English speaking student population is education in the home language necessary for their success in school?
4. What is the economic and social status of the minority language group in the community?
5. What is the attitude toward bilingual education on the part of the adult members of the minority language group who no longer identify with the minority language group?
6. Does this latter group feel a strong desire to keep its cultural heritage alive?

The answers to these questions and to many other related questions may determine what needs to be done by way of community education before bilingual education will be accepted, not only by the parents of the children who stand in great need of it, but also by the society at large. The answers to these questions have serious implications for any teacher preparation program in the area. The attitudes of the prospective teachers may require much refinement. In addition, the burden of educating the parents and the general public may rest heavily on the shoulders of the teacher in the bilingual classroom.

The second task requires the exploration of the nature of bilingual schooling. In the 1966 Reports of the Southwest Council of Foreign Language Teachers, we read the following definition of bilingual schooling:

> "Bilingual schooling" means the use of two languages (in this case English and Spanish) as mediums of instruction for a child or a group of children in any part or all of the school curriculum except the study of the languages themselves. For example, teaching all or a few subjects (except English or Spanish) through both tongues, or teaching some through English and some through Spanish would mean bilingual schooling. Teaching one of the languages simply as a bridge to the other, or teaching one as a subject only, is not bilingual schooling.[2]

There are two important elements to be noted in this definition:

1 - The home language is to be used as a medium of instruction.

2 - The home language is not to be used simply as a bridge until the child is ready to learn in English. His entire education should continue in both languages.

It is important that local educators understand the kinds of options that are possible in the organization of the bilingual school, that in determining the design

which they will eventually implement, they are aware of the implications of their choice in respect to the programs that will need to be designed to prepare teachers for their schools. The lack of agreement on the nature of the bilingual school at this time creates a serious problem for the teacher education institution, since the definition of the tasks which the teacher will be expected to perform is related directly to the nature and organization of the bilingual school.

A third task centers around the necessity of defining the special competencies needed by the teacher in the bilingual school. This task can best be accomplished by the joint efforts of the educators from the local school district and the teacher education institution. The teacher in the bilingual school should be an unquestionably good teacher. He should also be a unique kind of teacher; it is not sufficient that he be a certified teacher who happens to be bilingual. In particular, the teacher in the bilingual school would need specific types of competencies: linguistic and cultural.

To arrive at a description of the linguistic competency needed by the teacher, there is need to define certain tasks which the teacher will be expected to perform:

1 - If the teacher is to use French as the medium of instruction, this this would presuppose that he not only has the necessary preparation in the subject matter areas to be taught, but also that he has had experience in using the language needed to express adequately concepts related to the content.

2 - If the teacher is to use French as the language of instruction in the classroom, he will need to understand something of the nature of dialect and of the significance of the levels of usage in language to be able to function effectively in different levels and to know when to use varying forms of language with the child.

3 - If the teacher is to be responsible for the teaching of language arts, he must have sufficient linguistic background to be able to assess language dominance in the child, to recognize problems of interference, to supply the necessary remediation where problems exist. He must also have a command of the phonemic system of the language.

Since language is so intimately related to culture, the bilingual teacher must understand well both cultures represented in the school. He must not only know about the two cultures, but he must be sensitive to both and able to function comfortably in both. He must recognize how socialization patterns affect the learning processes of the child, his behavior, and his world view. He must understand the process of acculturation, and be able to detect when the child is disturbed by problems arising from cultural conflict. He must be able to guide the child through the very difficult period of adjustment to the demands of the larger society, while enabling him to retain his identity and respect for the cultural heritage of his family.

While we would like to think that we will not be expected to prepare an all-competent teacher, that the language gap can be bridged by team-teaching, by importing teachers from another country, or by use of other resources, few local school districts seem able at this time to afford the luxury of a sizable corps of highly specialized teachers in their bilingual schools. Hence, for all practical purposes it would seem that in our initial efforts to prepare teachers for bilingual schools we should be concerned about the preparation of generalists who have a fair degree of competence in several areas.

The next three tasks are interrelated:

4 - The development of a rationale for a program to prepare teachers, including the general and specific objectives.

5 - The designing of the curriculum which will provide the experiences necessary for the realization of the objectives.

6 - The establishing of the means of assessing the progress of the students toward the realization of the goals.

Any one of these tasks would provide sufficient matter for months of discussion. We can only mention them here. However, the characteristics of the students who will enter the program may shed some light on curriculum design. Students who enter such programs now come with a highly developed sense of urgency. They have a special need to understand the why of all aspects of the program. They want to get involved now. Three years is too long to wait before setting foot in the bilingual classroom. They are clamoring to experience every aspect of the program in the first year. They are concerned about relevance, about social inequality, about poverty. These characteristics do not distinguish them notably from the youth of the day, but they seem to possess this youthful impatience with a greater degree of intensity. We need to listen to their demands. There is a powerhouse of energy here which needs to be channeled in the right direction, else the energy will fizzle and die or go to the opposite extreme and explode.

The curriculum must make provision for fulfilling these needs early in the program. For example:

<u>Pre-professional contacts</u>

First year - Teacher Aide Experience - two mornings a week in bilingual classroom with a weekly seminar to discuss their experiences.

Second Year- Community Involvement - working with children in informal situations; recreational activities, etc.

Fourth Year- Student Teaching and Parental Involvement Project

Language Development

First two years - Special courses designed to develop the fluency needed to use the language in the classroom; developing confidence in the native speaker.

Third year - Incorporating both languages in the courses in methodology.

Linguistic Development

Courses in the phonology, morphology, and syntax of both languages, language assessment, and bilingual methodology.

Cultural Development

First Year	Cultural anthropology and the sociology of the minority group.
Second Year	Folklore and introductory sociology
Third Year	Psychology of the culturally different learner and history of the minority group in the U.S.
Fourth Year	Sociology of the family

A last task concerns the problem of the recruitment of students for the bilingual program. Several issues are involved:

1 - What kind of students are we looking for?

2 - Are selective admissions criteria to be used by the university?

3 - Who will be responsible for establishing these criteria?

4 - How can we determine whether poor scholastic achievement is due to lack of native ability or to poverty of educational environment in the past?

5 - How can we determine if the student has the motivation necessary to persevere in a highly structured program?

6 - If we select students who give evidence of promise, but whose academic deficiencies are evident, what kind of provisions must we make to enable them to succeed?

7 - Is there anything built into the program that recognizes the strengths which the native teacher brings to the program?

I have attempted to explore with you some aspects of the major tasks we face in attempting to design and implement a program to prepare teachers for the bilingual school. If it seemed that the questions outweighed the answers, that is just about how it is! We have not yet even identified all of the questions that we should be asking. Until we do, we will struggle along with very simple answers which will stand much in need of refining. In due time, hopefully, we will gain greater understanding of the psychological, linguistic, and sociological aspects of the education of the bilingual child through study and research. Then we can revise our teacher preparation programs in the light of these understandings.

FOOTNOTES

1. Fishman, Joshua. "The Status and Prospects of Bilingualism in the United States," Modern Language Journal, 44 (March, 1965), 143-55.

2. Stubing, Charles. (ed.). "Bilingualism," Reports of the Southwest Council of Foreign Language Teachers, El Paso, Texas: November 4-5, 1966, 9.